

INTERCOLLEGIATE BROADCASTING SYSTEM

Memorandum

TO: Member and Trial Groups

DATE: March 26, 1948

FROM: Paul F. Yergin, Bus. Mgr.

FILE: B 14.1

SUBJECT: Services rendered by IBS

Recently, in connection with dues payments, a lot of people have been asking just why a station should belong to IBS and pay dues to it. In many cases they argue that they can't see that they are getting anything out of it, and that they would be just as well off outside IBS. I'll try to give a few arguments on the subject.

At least half the benefit of belonging to IBS is either hidden or potential. That is, the efforts made on behalf of the station are often not visible to the station, and in many cases belonging to IBS acts as a kind of insurance in addition to its immediate benefits. I'll enlarge on this some.

The legal status of campus radio is at present (and always has been) rather shaky. It operates under a rule of the Federal Communications Commission which was originally intended to cover miscellaneous "noise" generating devices and various industrial control devices. It was never meant to cover any kind of broadcast service. For the first ten years or so of the existence of campus radio, the FCC was content to let this situation go on, having first assured itself that a responsible group was supervising things. (That's right-- the responsible group is IBS). Now, however, with the whole radio transmission problem becoming more serious, and with campus radio expanding by leaps and bounds, the FCC thinks it is about time to re-assess the situation. So again IBS comes into the picture.

The FCC is currently conducting tests at a number of colleges in order to obtain some facts on the operation of college stations. On these facts, and on facts supplied to them by IBS, they intend to base completely new (and almost certainly radically different) rules for campus radio and similar activities. Depending on what they find, these rules may well range from forbidding this type of broadcasting altogether (don't kid yourselves, they may do that) to altering the rules to make it easier for stations to cover their college populations. The latter course, if followed, will almost certainly bring with it any of a number of possible restrictions-- e.g. licenses, non-commercial operation, inspections, reports to the FCC, and so on. In fact, any course which leaves open the possibility of campus broadcasting at all will certainly have new strings attached to it.

IBS has been cooperating with the FCC on this problem, and has, throughout the years, continually presented the case for campus radio to the FCC. Too many people have somehow got the idea that campus broadcasting was something that had just about escaped the notice of the FCC, and was carried on in a sort of underground way. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact that the FCC will now assign call letters to IBS stations is proof of the high regard the FCC has for IBS, and of the fact that they have been fully aware of the situation all along. IBS has, for quite some time now, kept the FCC informed of the location, frequency, and call letters of campus stations.

This is only one of a number of "hidden" services performed by IBS. It alone should be worth the trivial dues stations pay to IBS now.

A good case of the "insurance" nature of the services of IBS has just occurred, in connection with the FCC tests mentioned above. One of the stations tested, a Member station of IBS, was found by the FCC to have too high a signal strength. Worried by this, the station promptly went off the air, and then wired IBS its situation, followed by a letter of explanation. Within a few days that station had received two detailed letters from IBS departments, asking for more detailed data and making preliminary recommendations for correcting the offending radiation. This project is still in the works. With any luck at all, the station should be back on the air within a few more days. The important thing to note here is that: 1. The station wired IBS immediately, and 2. It had filed information about its transmission system with IBS previously. (If it had kept that data up to date, it might even be on the air now. As it was, some revisions had to be reported to IBS before proper recommendations could be made.)

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The director of this station expressed his feelings about it in a P.S. attached to his letter, sent after hearing from IBS right after his wire: "It's a wonderful thing to belong to IBS."

The above two examples, one of "hidden" services, the other of "insurance" value, are but two of the most recently important of a tremendous number of such things that IBS does for its stations. I have just given these two as examples. It would be pointless to continue the list.

Besides these relatively intangible services, there are, as most of you perfectly well know, very concrete and immediate services which IBS performs. I'll only mention a few of these, as examples.

For Trial groups, one of the most important problems is engineering information. The IBS Technical Data book is supplied to every station on becoming Trial members of IBS. It is kept up to date by additions and revisions. (A new edition is due right now) It contains discussion of the problems met in setting up a campus station, and contains specific and detailed suggestions about building a station. Circuit diagrams of successful transmitters are given, and details of the various possible methods of coupling signals into power lines are shown. In addition, information and recommendations are given on studio equipment. It should not be supposed that the technical data book is of value only to established stations. Any station which feels that its technical set-up--equipment or studio layout--could be improved can find valuable information in the Technical Data Book.

For both Trial and Member groups, the Engineering Advisory Service is very valuable. IBS can provide, on request, detailed recommendations on almost any problem met in campus radio broadcasting. Advice on design and construction of studios, studio equipment and transmitters, on purchase of commercial microphones, turntables, studio consoles, etc., can all be had on request. It ought to be, but unfortunately isn't, standard practice for every station to send copies of proposed improvements in the station facilities to the IBS engineering department for comment. Too many stations have invested a lot of money in studios, or equipment, and then wrote to IBS describing it all, and asking "How do you like it?". What sort of answer do they expect at that late date? Too often it would only be cruel to point out the defects!

For Member stations which are well-established and in essentially sound condition, IBS offers a means for exchanging programs and program ideas with other campus stations. No station can ever feel that its program service is adequate! Variety is the life of a station, and ideas from other stations can be a wonderful shot in the arm to a station's program department. Also, exchanging programs (a tape exchange and script exchange system are on the verge of operation) can offer an incentive for improvement of quality to stations with already-good program departments, and give stations with weak program departments some good programs to bolster their schedules and act as examples for guidance.

For all stations, periodic meetings (now regional) of people from many stations offer valuable opportunities to "see how the other fellow does it" and to refresh viewpoints. These meetings also serve to fire up the interest of station staff members in the activity.

I have so far not mentioned advertising. This is for a good reason. For too long IBS was, in the minds of many station managers and staffs, just a source of possible advertising income. Well, right now no income is in-coming from that. But beyond that, if IBS is only needed to get advertising, there are other, probably better ways of doing that. Unless IBS can stand on its own feet, without the "prop" of advertising, there is a serious defect in it. We are now engaged in an attempt to show that it can make its own way, on the value of its services to its members.

Please don't think that advertising has been dropped by IBS. Strong efforts are being put into it, but NOW not because IBS needs it so much as because the stations (at least quite a few of them) need it to survive. IBS can survive without advertising, because it is worth enough to its members to keep it alive without it.

Well, that's enough for now. We'll beat the drums for IBS again soon!